CHAPTER TWO

... And There Was Life in the Valley

Winter in the mountains and valleys of Deseret was a test of faith and stamina for the pioneer Saints. Snows and bitter, blowing winds came early and lasted long. In the high valleys of the Wasatch the frosts were heavy in September and snows were on the ground in October. Spring sunshine rarely melted the earth's snow crust until late March or April, leaving only about five summer months to prepare for cold, ice and snow all over again.

Anxieties about the weather were sharply accentuated for some 11 pioneer families in Utah Valley during the winter of 1858-59, for they were making plans to move into new homes high in the Wasatch mountains when Spring came.

The road through Provo Canyon had been finished before the snows fell and a bridge spanned the Provo River. With the decision made to move into the valley, they spent the short days and long, crisp winter nights in building furniture and making clothes. Plows had to be sharpened and harrows made ready for the sagebrush and soil of the new country. Wagons had to be repaired and those who lacked teams had to acquire them.

William Meeks was appointed leader of the group and they met frequently under his direction to ask the Lord to bless them in their preparations. Their constant prayer was that the elements would be tempered so they could mature crops and sustain themselves and their families in the new country.

Spring came late in 1859 and it was the last day of April before the group of 11 men with their three wagons and teams of oxen could leave Provo.

Families of the men had agreed to remain behind in Provo until log cabins could be built and other preparations made for their coming. Tearfully, the wives and children stood by that April morning as they watched their husbands and fathers start out toward Provo Canyon and a new life.

Facing the uncertainties of the venture were Thomas Rasband, John Crook, Charles N. Carroll, John Carlile, John Jordan, Henry Chatwin, Jesse Bond, James Carlile, William Giles Jr., William Carpenter and George Carlile.

Winter and the forces of nature had played havoc with the road in many places and traveling was slow. In addition, several snowslides blocked the route, making the journey hazardous as well as exhausting.